

MAY 1981

20p

Socialist Standard

Official journal of the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the World Socialist Party of Ireland · Vol 77 No 921

AGAINST ALL WAR



WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN
THE SOCIALIST PARTY
page 82

A May Day message

It is 1981, although it may as well be 1881. People are still living in slums; starvation still afflicts millions of the earth's inhabitants; children still cry out for the good things in life which their parents' poverty denies them; old people still die of the cold in winter; tramps still sleep on the Embankment; squalor and insecurity are still a daily reality for many. The times may be changing, but the stench of decay still contaminates our society as much as it did any Victorian city. The sickness of capitalism has shown no signs of responding to any miracle cures.

The cause of social problems is class division. Our message is directed solely at the majority class: those who own little more than their labour power, which they must sell for a price called a wage or salary in order to live. The working class runs society from top to bottom; but they do not receive the benefits of their labour. The means of wealth production and distribution — the land, factories, mines, offices, newspapers — are owned by a minority, the capitalist class, who receive rent, interest and profit as a result. The two classes have no interests in common — the gain of one is the loss of the other. The political aim of the capitalist class, and all the parties which stand for capitalism, is to ensure that the workers are prepared to lose so that the capitalists may gain. "Don't go on strike" they tell us. "Fight in our wars to defend our markets, obey our laws, follow our morals and, above all, don't listen to those socialists because they want to steal our wealth." Millions of workers are taken in by this propaganda. They make profits for the capitalists, they build palaces and mansions for them, they sing their national anthems, they even fight and die in their armies.

Socialists stand for a system of society in which the means of wealth

production and distribution are owned and controlled by the whole community. Instead of producing wealth for the profit of the few, wealth in socialism will be produced solely for human use. There will be no buying and selling, but free access for all people to the abundant wealth which society can produce. In a socialist society food will be produced to eat, houses to live in, clothes to wear.

In advocating this sane alternative to the economic anarchy of capitalism, socialists are accused of all sorts of sins. We are called Utopians because we want what has never before happened. Human history is an unceasing record of changes which have never before happened, but those with a conservative outlook (both of the Right and Left) imagine that society has reached its final stage and that we must be stuck with capitalism for evermore. We are called extremists because we dare to advocate real social democracy, rather than the dictatorship of the rich and the powerful. We are told that we are merely envious of the wealth of others because we object to a system where the wealth producers are impoverished while privileged scroungers sit in their country estates and moan about how lazy the workers are. We are said to be attempting to steal from the capitalists rewards and wealth that which we are not entitled to, when the truth is the reverse: it is the capitalists who are a robber class, living off the legally stolen profits which they obtain by exploiting the workers. We are accused of all these things by the capitalists and their gullible or bribed defenders. But we still continue to wholly oppose the profit system and still we urge workers everywhere to organise politically for the establishment of a social system that will cater for their needs.

Millions of workers are taken in by

their masters' propaganda. They learn it at school. They read it in the press. They see it on TV. They sing about it in the churches. They are lectured on it by the politicians. Those who have seen through the capitalist con-trick are still very few. But our numbers will grow, for we are aided in our propaganda by capitalism, which throws up endless contradictions for workers to face. Experience of capitalism drags workers out of the fog of acquiescence into the movement of resistance. The Socialist Party of Great Britain is fuelled by capitalism. The system is an ungrateful ally: you may be loyal to it, but it will not bother about you if the needs of profit so dictate. Under capitalism, needs come a poor second to profits. It is this antagonism of class interests, between capitalists and workers, robbers and robbed, which makes socialism an urgent necessity.

It is 1981, and we are still stuck with the same system and many of the same problems as in 1881. In the intervening period, millions have starved to the death. Millions have been sacrificed to the god of profit on the battlefields of the world. Our environment has become dangerously polluted. Millions have faced, and do still face, the poverty of the dole queue. Machinery of destruction has been invented which would have been unthinkable in 1881. Some call this progress.

Yet progress has happened. In 1981 we do possess the technological know-how to create enough wealth to provide for the needs of the entire world population. Even in 1881 this was possible, but today the immensity of technological knowledge is such that human labour could be made pleasurable and efficient by the use of new technology. In 1881 there was no Socialist Party in Britain. Today there is. Our message is a simple one: Join Us.

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THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

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The Executive Committee meets 7.30 every Tuesday at 52 Clapham High Street, SW4. Correspondence for the Executive Committee should be sent to the General Secretary at the above address. Letters containing postal orders, cheques to be crossed, made payable to SPGB and sent to A. Waite at the above address. Orders for literature should be sent to the Literature Dept. at the above address. Articles, correspondence and notices for the *Socialist Standard* to be sent to SSPC, 76 Ladbroke Grove, London W11.

POLITICAL NOTES

Stand again

Is panic the only motivator of Labour MPs agog at the polls (for what they are worth) which say that the Social Democratic (sic) Party would sweep to victory at an early general election? Could conscience also be gnawing away at them?

Such questions spring to mind when reading of the anguished demands from the Labour benches that any MP who joins the SDP should at once resign from Parliament and fight a by-election under their new colours.

These MPs, runs the argument, were elected by voters who (except in the case of B. F., or Brocklebank-Fowler) supported the Labour Party programme. If they have now changed their political views, those electors are disenfranchised; the honest, democratic thing to do is to give the constituents the chance to have their say on the change.

This indignation would be more impressive if the House of Commons were not full of people who spend their time in Parliament imposing policies very different from those they were elected on. Yet none of them has so far resigned on the issue.

Labour MPs are especially guilty in this. How many of them, for example, told the electors in 1974 that they stood for cuts in living standards, medical services, for breaking strikes, for making the rich richer and the poor poorer? And how many of them eased a tortured conscience, when their government carried out these policies, by asking the voters what they thought in a by-election?

If MPs really behaved as those anxious Labour members are now demanding, the House of Commons would be pretty well empty. The bars, the dining rooms, the lobbies would no longer resound with the jolly banter of capitalism's legislators. The House is said to be the most exclusive club in the world but, as any political careerist will agree, you can take exclusivity too far.

Crooked aim

"It is the thinking person's party" trumpeted a recent convert to the Social Democratic (sic) Party. Unkindly critics might have commented that it doesn't take that much brain to wield an Access card but let that pass; after all, the SDP are only trying to prove that they are alive and clicking in the age of the credit card. Vote now — pay later might be their motto.

Well how does the "thinking person" like his politics? Before he or she fills in that credit card number on the application to join the SDP, he/she is invited to agree that they "share our (SDP) aims". Now that sounds perfectly straightforward



A tale of little consequence, or why all the fuss between friends — it's only pricks.

ward except that the SDP so far doesn't have any aims. Indeed, according to the *Guardian* (10/4/81) the hairy SDP leader William Rodgers "... insisted that there was still a long way to go before the infant SDP has even a constitution, let alone an agreed political programme."

It would take the thinking person — not to say one who could read and write — only a minute or so to run through the advertisement which included the application form on which they had to confess their support for SDP aims to realise that there was absolutely no hint there of what SDP aims might be.

The very most the T.P. would find would be vague promises like standing for "... a new future", which may be a strong contender for the Waffler of the Week award but is not a political policy worth — or even capable of — being discussed.

Of course traditionalists who relished the empty thunder of Churchill, the oiled assurances of Macmillan, the sweeping platitudes of Wilson, will welcome the SDP as a talented contributor to the art of political half-think (their stuff does not yet merit the description of double-think).

But the SDP claims to be new, to be breaking the mould of traditional British politics. So far their supporters remain starry eyed and hopeful in their delusion but they must be aware that using a credit card is only a postponement of reality; eventually the bill has to be paid.

Reagan responding

With a bullet in his lung Ronald Reagan gave out, unknowingly, some discomfiting lessons for all exponents of the political assassination policy.

Anyone who thought that getting Reagan out of the way would modify his policies could not have been reassured by the fact that as a result the American working class were almost subjected to a period under the rule of Alexander Haig. The ex-Vietnam general is by reputation a harder line, farther right wing hawk than Reagan himself.

As he recovered, wise-cracking, from his wound, Reagan was borne up on a popular wave of sympathy and support. Most observers agreed that if he had been fighting the presidential election right then his victory would have been even more emphatic than it was last November.

The majority Reagan got then would not have melted away or solidified around an opponent, if the assassination attempt had succeeded. An example of this was when Johnson swept Goldwater almost to oblivion in 1964. In that campaign the Democrats coldly exploited the emotional response to John Kennedy's killing which, far from damaging their chances, must have contributed to their crushing win.

Political murder is an established method with "extremists" of both "left" and "right" wings but there is no reason to think that it acts against the ideas represented by the victim. The evidence in the cases of Kennedy and the attempt on Reagan (although the signs are that neither was for political ends) is that the murder of a politician induces sympathy and not hostility.

The properly effective way of dealing with an opposing theory is to prove, if possible, that it is at variance with reality. Such a method, although it has little appeal for the political romantics with guns, is the only way in which we shall build the political consciousness needed to establish a new society.

Socialists are against all War

"Capitalism and war are inseparable. There can be no capitalism without conflicts of economic interest. From these arise the national rivalries and hatreds, the fears and armaments which may at any time provoke war on a terrifying scale."

from THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR (1951 edition)

In the years which have passed since the first nuclear bombs dropped, the horror of war which once produced pacifism now often results in protests against nuclear weapons. But pacifist movements failed to prevent or even limit wars; CND and the European Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (END) can do no better. A no doubt agreeable and time-consuming occupation for diplomats, the Geneva "peace" and "disarmament" talks drag on for decades and at least keep these people from doing too much actual damage. But the results of their endless labours are hardly reassuring.

After World War I the League of Nations was set up, with the aim of preventing any future war. It failed. After World War II the United Nations was established. Since then, there has not been one single year of world peace: Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, Malaysia, Kenya, the Congo, the Indo-Pakistan wars, Nigeria, the Sudan, Chile, Bogota, Ethiopia, and many other conflicts have raged. Not all wars are "news": till recently, how many of us were familiar with the situation in El Salvador?

Before the First World War, European states lined up in two opposing alliances, but the apparently formidable equation of the Triple Alliance against the Triple Entente did not prevent war in 1914. Today the USA and Russia use a balance of nuclear power—Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD)—to deter the use of nuclear weapons, and their well-advertised possession of these weapons to deter head-on "conventional" war. This policy does not however prevent conflict breaking out: what happens is that the two superpowers fight their wars by proxy, in "small far away countries".

Civil Defence Farce

If CND appeals to the optimists, Civil Defence has attractions only for masochists, pessimists and humourists prepared to crouch under a table with children, buckets, baked beans and a fire extinguisher and play Scrabble for several weeks. After a nuclear attack, food shortages would be acute: "If you saw a frog running about you would have to wash it down to get rid of active dust, cook it (alive?) and eat it."¹ As a letter-writer asked, "How far underground with two weeks' supplies of beans under your arm can you get in 3.6 minutes?"²

The Government argues that to provide shelters for all would be too expensive: £60,000 million for 10 million households as compared with £5,000,000,000 for Trident missiles. Some people are now buying or building their own shelters

but there are problems here too. As the *New Scientist* commented, "the new breed of nuclear entrepreneurs unfortunately... includes few experts, and prospective buyers should bear in mind the ancient common law rule of *caveat emptor*. If a bomb shelter is ever put to the test and proves to be defective, the aggrieved party is unlikely to be able to resort to consumer legislation".³ One DIY back-garden shelter-builder described another problem: "I hope all the neighbours build them—we would feel awful if they were banging on our man-hole cover to be let in".⁴ The *New Scientist* found that shelters cost anything from £1500, jerrybuilt, to £30,000 *de luxe*.

Survivors will need to be both rich and ruthless, equally capable of shutting out their neighbours, eating frogs, and conducting mass cremations. Or they could all be scientologists: L. Ron Hubbard claims that taking niacin and "auditing" in a Purification Rundown will ensure that scientologists can survive where humans can't.

"Queensberry Rules" for war

What about attempts to control or limit war? International agreements such as

Hague Conventions and Geneva Protocols have, among other things, banned certain weapons such as poison gas and tried to control the treatment of non-combatants and prisoners of war and protect the sanctity of property in anti-looting laws. Such agreements are not observed in practice. Mountbatten, with considerable experience of military operations in two World Wars, said: "I know how impossible it is to pursue military operations in accordance with fixed plans and agreements".⁵

In World War II saturation bombing of cities caused a terrible Massacre of Innocents: civilian populations were primary military targets—as they still are. Prisoners of war and non-combatants were used as slaves in German industry and agriculture and by the Japanese and Russians. German firms such as Krupp, the arms manufacturers, looted from conquered lands, as, later, did the Americans, the British, French and Russians.

In the nuclear age, the Non-Proliferation Treaty has been an abject flop. It is useless to attempt a list of states with a nuclear capability: it would soon be out of date. We can however examine the 1972 SALT I agreement and assess its effect.

Growth in American and Russian Strategic Weapons⁶

	1966		1971		1978	
	US	Russia	US	Russia	US	Russia
ICBM's	904	292	1054	1513	1054	1400
Submarine-launched Ballistic Missiles	592	107	656	448	656	1015
Bombers	630	155	455	145	366	135
Total delivery vehicles (i.e. missiles + bombers)	2126	554	2165	2106	2076	2550
MIRVed missiles	—	—	164	—	1046	370
Independent warheads on missiles	1496	399	2446	1961	11125	4635

Vietnam 1971





Each superpower had about 10 times as many warheads 6 years after SALT I as they had 6 years before. This they call progress.

The CND Argument

SALT II, would probably mean a maximum of 2,500 MIRVed missiles, including 820 MIRVed ICBMs.⁷ It has been estimated that to destroy effectively all buildings in London would require only 242 50KT (Kiloton) warheads, and to destroy all Moscow only 141 such warheads would be needed.⁸

Yet SALT II is supported by the so-called Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament:

CND is wholly behind the ratification of SALT II, the continuance of détente and of negotiations about intermediate nuclear systems.⁹

CND propaganda relies on emotion, on the belief that nuclear weapons are unique in their effects by focussing on the consequences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Is this argument valid? The immediate effects of nuclear bombs are fire, blast and radiation sickness; their long-term effects are cancer and genetic damage. The view that these can only be caused by nuclear weapons is false.

CND themselves compared the resulting fire from an A-bomb with the Hamburg, Tokyo and Dresden firestorms, caused by thousands of incendiary bombs. "The fires all joined together to make a single holocaust or 'fire storm'. These huge pillars of fire caused winds of up to 150 mph . . . to rush in towards the

burning area . . . People caught in the street were soon burned to death. The fate of people in fireproof shelters was not much better. The air that they breathed had to come in from the street, and the temperature of that air was 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit, or nearly as hot as molten glass. This forced some people to rush out of the shelters into the flames outside. Others were killed by carbon monoxide . . . The fires burned for days and some areas were so hot that they could not be entered for weeks. Even then, the insides of some shelters burst into flames when they were forced open, and some were even red-hot."¹⁰

The long-term toxic effects of a nuclear bomb are cancer and genetic damage, but these are not caused by nuclear weapons alone. Similar effects have come from the chemical dioxin, both in a military context when it was used under the name of Agent Orange,¹¹ and when released accidentally, as at Seveso and in the USA at Love Canal. Napalm burns are horrific, as are those caused by radiation.

Suicide!

The Doomsday argument asserts that a nuclear war would be a suicidal catastrophe. As Mountbatten said, "in the event of a nuclear war, there will be no chances, there will be no survivors — all will be obliterated"¹². This argument seems convincing enough except that a similar view was held by preceding generations in pre-nuclear times. Witness the appeal by the King of Belgium and other heads of state in August 1939:

Beneath our very eyes the camps are forming and a fearful struggle is being prepared in Europe. Is our continent to commit suicide in a terrifying war at the end of which no nation could call itself victor or vanquished, but in which the spiritual and material values created by centuries of civilisation would founder? War psychosis is invading every home, and although conscious of the unimaginable catastrophe which a conflagration would mean for all mankind, public opinion abandons itself more and more to the idea that we are inevitably to be dragged into it . . . We can only hope that those in whose hands rests the fate of the world will . . . give effect to the desires which they have so often expressed that the disputes which separate them shall be settled in peace, and thereby avoid the catastrophe which threatens humanity."¹³

Why do we have wars and armed forces at all? It appears impossible to prevent war, and futile to attempt to limit wars. We must, if we are to do anything practical about war, first understand why wars happen.

Common Myths

1. Overpopulation — but after 1945 the confrontation between America and Russia was between what would be regarded as two under-populated states.

2. Hunger. A consequence of war or preparation for war, not usually a cause of war. In 1914 and 1939 Germany had full granaries.

3. Lunatic leaders. But these, like the "sane" ones, depend for their power on support: even dictators have to be loved.

4. "Merchants of death": the left-wing scapegoat theory, blaming war on the arms trade from which private firms (Krupp, Lockheed, Vickers) profit. But most arms trade is now government business, and in any case, such dealers only fish in troubled waters.

5. Humans are basically aggressive and violent. Irrelevant, also untrue. Why do states need conscription to coerce people into their armed forces?

6. "Just wars" — for example for the "defence of democracy". We must distinguish between the actual cause of war and the propaganda used to whip up support for it. Always, both sides claim that they are in the right. God inevitably hedges his bets, if you believe the sky-pilots. As examples of this type of argument, in 1940 MPs of all parties were of one mind: we must "wage war against a monstrous tyranny" (Churchill), this was a "war for liberty" (Lees-Smith, Lab.); and we must "preserve our liberties" (Percy Harris, Lib.).¹⁵ At the same time, the Defence of the Realm Act muzzled opponents, and internment for political reasons became a tool of the "voluntary totalitarianism" freely accepted by those liberty-loving MPs.

Then as now, governments tried to keep military matters away from public and democratic discussion. 1940 — "Is it becoming the practice of ministers to make their important announcements on the wireless? That is bad enough, but



Paul Nash's painting: The desolation of War (Imperial War Museum)

when they do not even make them on the wireless which addresses the people at home, but make them on the Overseas wireless at three o'clock in the morning, that... is not fair to the House of Commons"16. 1980 – over the decision, announced *without prior discussion*, to buy the Trident Missile System, Mrs Thatcher was asked: "On such a momentous decision, is it right to put a *fait accompli* to the House of Commons?" Her reply: "we have to do just that"17. 7. Defend our country. A bogus plea: workers have no country to defend. No "nation" is a single group: each nation is divided into two opposing classes, into owners and non-owners. The working class have never won a war yet; they only fight them in their masters' interests.

The real cause

Why do wars happen. What are they fought about? Certainly not ideals or ideology: Stalin allied Russia with Nazi Germany and later with Britain and America. The USA trades with "Red" China. It is economic interest which creates wars and which forces governments to prepare for war. As John Nott, Minister of Defence, argued in favour of Reagan's Rapid Deployment Force: "We have crucial minerals and in fact our oil supplies to defend"18. Callaghan, when leader of the Opposition, also said: "We must welcome the intention of President Carter to set up a task force of 100,000 men which could move quickly into position, if only because of the utter dependence of the West on oil"19.

It is not *our* economic interests which are at stake. We – the working class – control only one commodity, have only one financial asset at our disposal: our ability to work. We live by hiring ourselves out, renting our lives, selling our mental and physical skills to the employing class for wages or salaries.

Those whose interests are at stake are our employers, the exploiting class. *Theirs* are the oilfields in the Gulf States, the mineral resources of Southern Africa, the capital investments, trade and markets which no capitalist government can afford to ignore. It is *their* sordid, commercial competition which leads to conflict and war.

Just as in the High Street supermarkets compete against one another, so in the international market companies and State enterprises compete for lucrative markets and access to vital and profitable raw material and mineral resources. This never-ending competition periodically erupts into armed conflict. Peaceful conquest by means of sales drives and takeover bids develops into more than mere "trade war".

In boom times, with expanding demand, production is increased on all sides, capital flows in, new companies are formed, new factories built, more salesmen are hired. Profits are good, and politicians re-discover that "free trade" is the only proper way to run the system. But if for any reason the markets are full and demand ceases to match the supply, salesmen are forced to travel to remote regions and companies more and more resort to "unfair" trading practices, such as "dumping". The casualty rate in this trade war is seen in the bankruptcy figures, and heard in howls of boardroom anguish as dividends are cut.

Capitalist production is carried on with a view to profiting from the surplus value created by workers – value over and above what they receive as wages or salaries. It is for *this* prize – surplus value – that oil wells are opened up, that factories, farms and mines are operated, and Wimpy Bars compete with Kentucky Fried Chicken, Chinese takeaways with Pizza palaces.

Our society is characterised by two

forms of warfare: economic competition and class war – the exploitation of those who have to sell their labour power in order to live, thereby enriching those who live off our unpaid labour. This class war also has casualties: millions die from poverty, hunger or disease each year. Battles take place, as last year in South Africa, where a demonstration of black workers was gunned down by police, leaving more than 40 killed and over 300 injured. Next day the Police Commissioner said *at all costs and no mercy* will be shown"20.

Usually this war is waged silently, with employers forcing wage-cuts and workers resisting the drop in their living standards. A hundred years ago it was the same: "William M. Evarts, our accomplished Secretary of State, ... (said) that our working men must accept lower wages in the future ... (due to) the much higher rates per day which ... cannot be permanently maintained when we are exporting largely of domestic manufactures in competition with the products of the cheap labor of Europe"21.

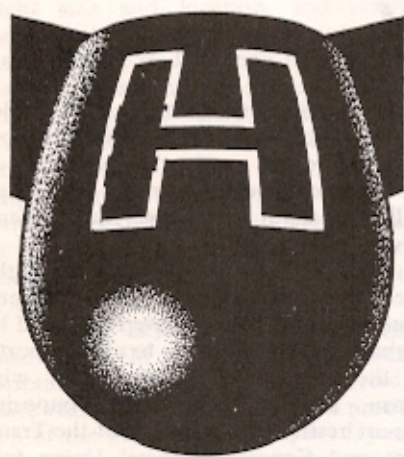
By paying workers less, employers hope to be able to sell their products cheaper than their rivals, so grabbing a larger share of the market. Selling more, they would obtain more surplus value and so more capital, in time becoming stronger than their competitors. All this at the expense of *us*, the have-nots.

In the present recession, with many industries laying off workers and cutting back production, some governments hope that arms exports will compensate for their declining trade in other sectors: tanks for cars. In technology, government investment leans heavily towards the military. In advanced laser technology, for instance, VULCAN – a civilian laser – cost the Science Research Council only £2 million, while HELEN – developed at Aldermaston for military research – cost £7 million22. Last year Russia made 89 space launches: only 8 payloads were non-military. America launched 12 satellites, 10 of which were Defence Department jobs23.

Capitalist society generates war, because it is based on competition. To

Poster from Spanish Civil War





wage war successfully, governments pour huge resources into the production of the most horrendous weapons; they then compete in exporting this advanced technology to other – potential rival – governments. Thei economic competition periodically explodes into military conflicts. No amount of petitions and protests by pacifists and CNDers can alter the fact that this is how this society works. Such protests leave untouched the root cause of war, the competitive nature of capitalist society, based on the exploitation of the working class. This is the problem that working people have to understand, and to sidetrack them from this understanding is to do them a grave disservice.

C SKELTON

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WHY SOCIALISTS ARE CONTESTING ISLINGTON SOUTH AND FINSBURY

In 1922, after Mallory had turned back from the north face of Everest at 27,000 feet, he gave lectures on climbing beyond the height of human survival. Baffled listeners could not understand the point of such a man-versus-mountain contest. Why did he still want to go back and climb it? "Because it's there" said Mallory.

Socialists are contesting Islington South and Finsbury in this month's GLC elections because it's there. Were our resources and members greater we would contest everything that's going. For elections are capitalism's weak spot, they are the time when the social system is up for grabs.

What could a Tory or other politician do with Islington South and Finsbury if they won a seat? Little more than sit down in the council chair provided, give and receive congratulations, then get swept away by the blizzard of capitalism. What can the councillors of Greater London do about the bomb and the dole queue, urban decay, shrinking allocations of money from the central government and wages that don't match prices for the workers? Hardly more than shake hands and commiserate with those who suffer. Who can plan activity in any large city, when practically everything that goes on involves the chaos of buying and selling commodities? Who can guarantee that goods and services will be there for all, in the face of the laws of this society: no cash, no sale: no profit, no production?

Yet socialists are contesting Islington South and Finsbury. In our campaign there will be no shaking hands all round, no kissing of babies and no election promises. The job of the candidate will not cease when his bottom hits the council chair. We are after this constituency as the first step

in the working class conquest of the powers of government.

Put your own, your parents and your grandparents experience together for once. A society with a labour market where people are bought and sold like goods cannot be governed in your interest. Because of this we do not stand as governors of the GLC. Socialists stand only as potential representatives of those workers who want to capture the powers of government. Once a majority of such seats are gained locally and nationally, then the government and employers of the world will be paralysed, unable to oppose the reorganisation of society into a harmonious commonwealth.

Workers of Islington South and Finsbury: In the past most of you have not bothered to vote in the GLC elections. Implicitly, you may have felt that, whoever gets elected, they will do nothing for the workers. And you were right! Whichever party you put into government, still the same social system continues, grinding out problems for you and riches for your employers. What then have you got to lose by becoming supporters of the SPGB? Capitalist society will tick over in the same way under Labour, Tory or whatever. Withdraw your consent and support from this society and the way to peaceful revolution is open. You can help to get socialism.

The meaning of socialism is simple to grasp, and grasp it you must, if you wish to support it. Socialism describes the future world that socialists think you ought to desire as the creators of wealth. It will be one world of common ownership, democratic control and free access to the products of labour. A social system like that is yours for the taking. It will be a struggle to get, but there will be a new world waiting for all at the end.

B K McNEENEY

Hiroshima 1945



Crisis in the motor industry

Set-backs in the car industry are not new. Like other industries, it gets into difficulties each time there is a world depression. This time, however, special factors have combined with the depression to bring many well-established companies to the verge of ruin, and to throw an abnormal number of motor workers out of their jobs. First was the enormous rise in the price of petrol. This reduced overall demand for cars and called for new models more economical in petrol consumption; a change-over to which some companies, including Chryslers, failed to adjust themselves. The whole world pattern of car production and export has been reshaped by the spectacular rise of the Japanese motor industry, challenging the supremacy of the American companies.

In 1960 passenger car production in Japan was a mere 165,000; compared to 6,675,000 in America and 1,359,000 in Britain. Between 1960 and 1974, world

using prices and often selling at a loss. In spite of motor workers' wages having been kept below the rise in prices (and in some cases reduced) most of the world's motor companies are losing money. In America in 1980 the losses were:— General Motors £500 million, Fords £677 million, American Motors (owned by Renault) £88 million and Chryslers £767 million — the biggest loss of any company in American history. In Britain British Leyland lost £535 million, yet the big Japanese companies all made a profit; for example Toyota £568 million. The number of motor workers has gone on increasing in Japan, but in America 25 per cent have been laid off and the loss of jobs in the British industry is on the way to 100,000. In an earlier setback in 1965-7, the production of motors in Britain fell 10 per cent. Since 1977 output has dropped by 30 per cent.

As far as the world depression is concerned, with its consequent reduction

that "the time has come . . . to consider urgently which alternative offers the most hope". In other words, the 364, many of them responsible for advising past failed policies, cannot even agree among themselves on what to do.

In all the countries invaded by the cheap Japanese motor vehicles, the companies and the Unions have responded by urging their governments to curb imports; in the first place by agreement with Japan, and failing that, by imposing import restrictions. Officials of the Transport and General Workers' Union told MPs at a meeting in the House of Commons:— "The British car industry will be dead within five years without import controls" (*The Times* 4/3/81). The demand for import restrictions does not even pretend to be a policy for protecting the world's car workers against unemployment. It would merely reduce unemployment in some countries and increase it in Japan. The Japanese companies estimate that a 15 per cent cut in their exports would put 70,000 Japanese workers out of their jobs (*The Times* 31/3/81).

Japanese motors are not the only ones being sold in the British market. The countries of origin include America, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Spain, Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and a Rumanian car is to be on sale here in the autumn. There is, of course, a reverse movement. British Leyland (along with car firms in Europe and America) is hoping to get into the Japanese market, and is planning to export its cars to Europe. Jointly with Peugeot they are to assemble and market a Peugeot car in Australia.

In several countries the hard-pressed motor companies have succeeded in getting government subsidies or loans. Contrary to declared government policy, British Leyland recently received £990 million and Chrysler of America have been saved, at least temporarily, from bankruptcy by a US government-backed loan of £360 million last year and £180 million this year. President Reagan's statement:— "This does not imply that this government approves of bailing out private companies in difficulties", sounds like Sir Keith Joseph telling MPs how it comes about that the Thatcher government has reluctantly adopted the same policy.

Having exploited to the full the direct export of cars to foreign markets, Japanese companies are now planning to set up plants inside these markets. They are negotiating to manufacture in Britain, thereby gaining unrestricted access to the whole EEC market, providing they use materials that are 80 per cent EEC origin.

One of these companies is Nissan, makers of the Datsun. They plan to invest £275 million, to produce 200,000



production doubled, but output in America rose by only 10 per cent, and their share of the world total fell from 53 to 28 per cent. But in Japan output had jumped to nearly 4 million, putting their car industry in second place to America's 7,332,000. Now, seven years later, Japan is on the way to being the world's leading producer of passenger cars, and is already by far the biggest exporter. This happened because output in Japan has gone on growing in the depression while in the rest of the world it has fallen. In 1980 the output of the American company, General Motors, dropped by 26 per cent, and Toyota now challenges General Motors for first place in the world. (The course of events in commercial load vehicles is much the same as in passenger cars.)

The Japanese companies have won their success by invading the home markets of the rest of the world, forcing the local-based companies to compete by red-

ucing prices and often selling at a loss. In spite of motor workers' wages having been kept below the rise in prices (and in some cases reduced) most of the world's motor companies are losing money. In America in 1980 the losses were:— General Motors £500 million, Fords £677 million, American Motors (owned by Renault) £88 million and Chryslers £767 million — the biggest loss of any company in American history. In Britain British Leyland lost £535 million, yet the big Japanese companies all made a profit; for example Toyota £568 million. The number of motor workers has gone on increasing in Japan, but in America 25 per cent have been laid off and the loss of jobs in the British industry is on the way to 100,000. In an earlier setback in 1965-7, the production of motors in Britain fell 10 per cent. Since 1977 output has dropped by 30 per cent.

As far as the world depression is concerned, with its consequent reduction

cars a year, subject to finding a site of the right size and location, and reaching agreement with the components companies and the trade unions. Nissan already has, or is planning, car plants in America, Mexico, Spain, Italy, Australia and Taiwan, and plans to manufacture motor components in Ireland. Toyota, Japan's largest motor company, has so far not favoured setting up plants abroad, but it is reported (*Sunday Times* 22/3/81) that they are considering joint production with Fords in America.

British Leyland has reached agreement to build a Honda-designed car in Britain and discussions are reported to have reached agreement on joint production of the Mini-Metro in Japan. Japanese cars dominate world exports because they are competitive in price and quality. The Chairman and Managing Director of Fords in Britain said: "The Japanese, more than anyone, have the ability to produce high quality vehicles on a massive scale at low cost." (*Daily Mail* 4/4/81). (He also said that Nissan's plan to set up a plant in Britain "could be catastrophic for this country's motor industry".)

Whatever may have been true in the past, it is not because wages in Japan are lower. Car workers' wages in Japan are now higher than the British. The Japanese companies score because their productivity (output per worker) is higher. Their plants are all new, or relatively new, and all use the latest and most efficient machinery and techniques. They have developed more efficient methods of management and work organisation, avoiding costly production hold-ups through delays in the chain of processes, and using fewer staff in supervision and control. Having succeeded in getting continuous strike-free production in motor plants in Japan, the managements are looking for the same in Britain. According to an article in the *Financial*

Times (25.2.81) the Nissan Company in its search for the right site will not look at plants or districts with a record of frequent strikes.

A problem British motor companies have had to handle is the multiplicity of unions. Lord Scanlon said in 1972, when he was President of the Engineering Union, that it takes members of 38 separate unions to make a motor car (*Sunday Times* 9/4/72).

The Nissan Company is insisting as one of the conditions for setting up its plant in Britain that there must be agreement for only one union to represent all the workers. Whether and how this obstacle can be overcome with the unions remains to be seen. The company is also insisting on the abolition of union demarcation practices. The Japanese style of manning is already being copied to a limited extent by Fords at Dagenham, with a proposal to abolish the whole grade of General Foreman.

As regards the future of American and European motor companies, an article in the *Financial Times* (23/2/81)

takes the line that their only way to survive is to equal the high productivity and quality control of the Japanese companies, by learning to apply Japanese techniques in their factories. Those who fail to do so will go under, as happened in the American television industry, when it was faced with an onslaught from Japanese exporters similar to that in the motor industry.

British Leyland hopes to reduce its losses in 1981-2, but expects to take from five to ten years to achieve "business results of a standard which will attract external funds on normal commercial terms". (*Financial Times* 20/3/81). Some observers think that it will never pay its way and is doomed to founder.

In the all-pervading gloom that overhangs the British motor industry, there is one small corner in which the sun still shines. The *Financial Times* (20/3/81) reported: "Sir Michael Edwardes, B.L. Chairman, has almost completed arrangements to sign his first contract with the company. This is expected to raise his salary to about £100,000 a year".

PARTY NEWS

Paris public meeting

There has at least been some sanity in this month's French presidential election: members and sympathisers of the Socialist Party of Great Britain organised a public meeting in Paris on the subject of universal suffrage and Marxism. Maximilien Rubel gave a talk on how Marx concluded in 1880 that the working class could change universal suffrage from an instrument of trickery into an "agent of emancipation" by mandating socialist delegates to immediately dismantle the state machinery of capitalism and establish socialism. Rubel stressed the importance of working-class consciousness in the transformation of society but then suggested that we should adopt a reform programme to win support. The logical outcome of reforming capitalism could be seen on the way back from the meeting: large posters with the most absurd and vague slogans lined the streets: "France needs a president. V. Giscard d'Estaing"; "Jobs first: Mitterrand for President" ("Socialist" Party); "With Huguette Bouchardeau for the alternative" (Unified Socialist Party); "Let's produce French: Marchais for President" (French Communist Party); and, most bemusing of all, "Now, together, act with Jacques Chirac". The alternative to this array of careerist hypocrites is for us to stop following leaders and cast a vote not for a person or a policy, but for a socialist society. The election issue of *Socialisme Mondial*, as well as a French version of the *Questions of the Day* pamphlet *Pour le Socialisme Mondial* is now available from Head Office.

C SLAPPER

The future of work

Wealth in present society is produced only when there is the prospect of a profit; in a socialist society, production would be carried out simply in order to satisfy human needs, whenever and wherever they occurred. The contrast was brought out very well by Mike Cooley of the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop

Stewards Committee, at a conference in March organised by the William Morris Society and the Institute for Contemporary Arts. Several SPGB members took part. Cooley argued that people could create high quality articles through satisfying, co-operative work, provided that the priority was *use* and not *exchange*.

Modern technology will only act as a liberating force if the basis of society is altered from market competition to human co-operation. At Lucas Aerospace co-operating workers are exploring the possibilities of creating useful work and production, although their struggle for survival in the world market system imposes severe limitations. Mike Cooley also told how Lucas workers had occupied the Willesden factory to oppose "rationalisation". One weekend they left the factory and on returning found that Lucas Industries had burnt out the inside of the place and ripped the roof off.

Ray Watkinson spoke about William Morris' views on work. Morris saw useful labour as the only true art, and looked forward to a time when socialist co-operation would allow all work to become creative and satisfying. Watkinson neglected to explain how Morris spent his later years campaigning for this, through the political organisation of the working class.

The discussion that followed was chaired by Geoffrey Robinson, MP, who more than once slipped in a sly plea for support for the Labour Party. He spoke of the "need" for a harmonious partnership between labour and capital. A socialist from the audience suggested we should get rid of this "holy alliance" and institute real harmony in a classless society. Robinson replied that we should keep working for harmony within the present economy, and keep socialism in mind for the future. "Like a carrot", came a call from the audience.

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MEETINGS

FULL DETAILS PAGE 98

Are you being driven mad?

One in twelve males and one in eight females in Britain will spend some part of their lives in a psychiatric hospital. Most women between thirty and sixty are regularly prescribed tranquillisers by their family doctor. Since its introduction in the 1930s, ECT (electric shock treatment or electroconvulsive therapy) has been used on thousands of people. There is a widespread use of neurosurgery and other therapy methods, and admissions to psychiatric hospitals are increasing as daily life in our society becomes more tense and frenzied.

"Madness" is very often behaviour which conflicts with conventional ideas of normality or proper thinking. We all think as an involuntary activity, in ways which are specifically human and which differentiate us from our older animal relations. To think is to reflect in the brain the material reality of the environment: it is a relationship between matter and matter. The way in which we relate to our material surroundings determines how our thoughts are to be classified by other people. In primitive society people believed that they were in touch with another world when dreaming. In the Middle Ages people who rejected Christian morality were tortured as lunatics who were possessed by the devil. "Sanity" can be interpreted as a readiness to accept common experiences in conformity with common ideas; "insanity" can be dissent from the social conditioning process.

Mediaeval society had certain ideas about how women should behave. Those women who did not fit in with those ideas were often persecuted as witches. Sprenger and Kramer's book on how to spot a witch, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, written in 1486, was the downfall of many a woman who suffered from epilepsy, the symptoms of which were listed in the book as the classical characteristics of a witch. In 1515 five hundred unfortunate women were killed for witchcraft in Geneva in the space of three months. In the eighteenth century the "mad" were confined to institutions where they were chained up, beaten, humiliated and put on public display. The diaries of many a nineteenth century nobleman contain reports of Sunday afternoon outings to the lunatic asylum to be entertained by the misfortunes of the deranged.

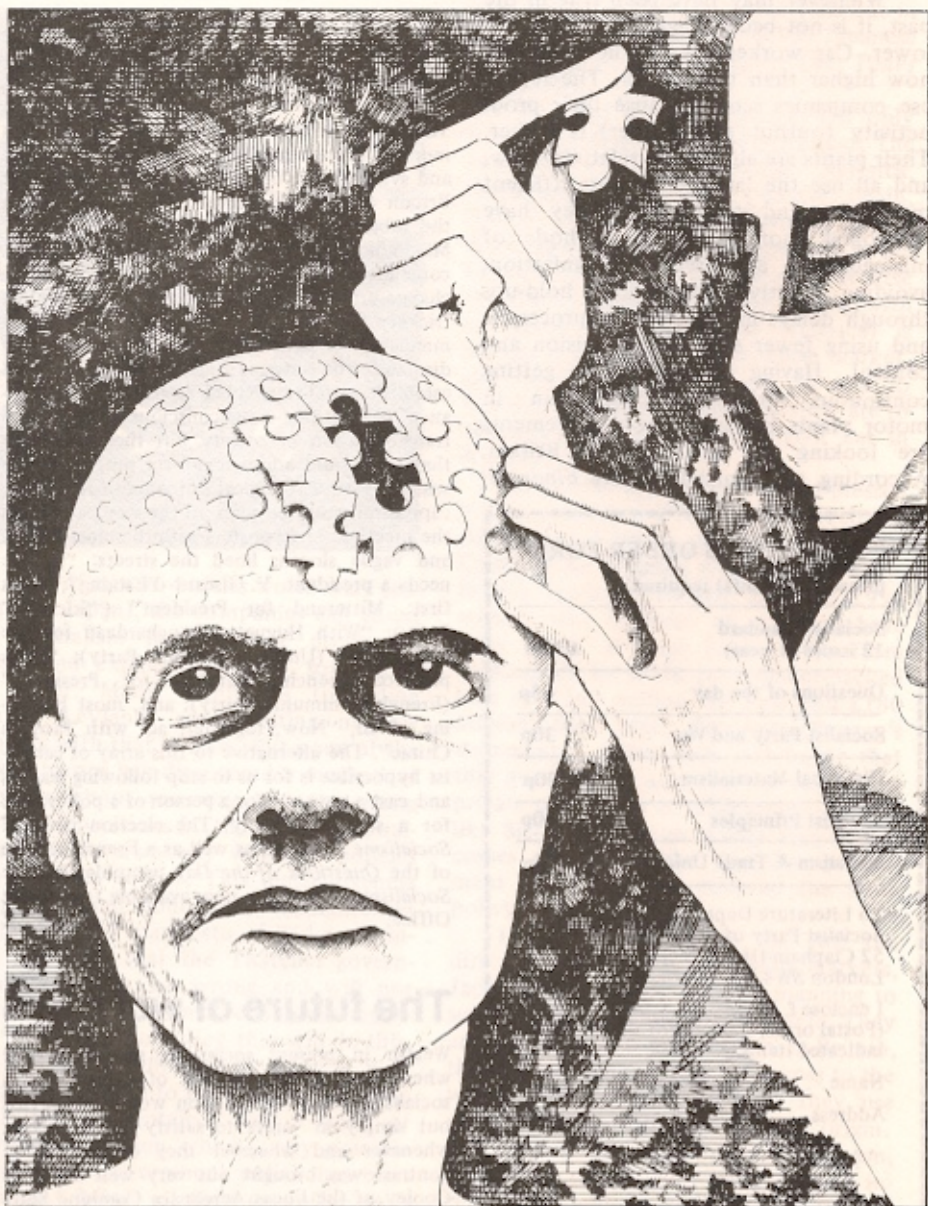
Most British mental hospitals were built to fit in with nineteenth century ideas about mental health: these days the chains have gone, but the humiliation of the confined has not. Many inmates in modern asylums were first put there for moral or criminal transgressions. An unmarried servant girl at the turn of the century who bore a child would face such moral outrage that she would become depressed and, instead of receiving sympathy from those around her, would be

locked up in an asylum. Soldiers who could not take the conditions of war, homosexuals who cracked up trying to repress their feelings for the sake of acceptability, poor children who saw nothing wrong with stealing from the rich, men who broke under the monotony or responsibility of their jobs, wives who were left on their own by husbands who grew tired of them, girls who could not conform to the advertisers' modes of anatomical excellence—all of these may be found in any psychiatric hospital. They are not sick—just sick of what society is.

Conventional mental disorders are experienced by almost everyone at some time. Depression is a perfectly natural response to a lifestyle in which we are taught to have expectations, but are denied the opportunity to fulfil them. If we are depressed because we are not allowed to do what is technically feasible but socially forbidden, we are simply re-

acting to a seemingly insoluble social dilemma. Socially produced ills are what cause such depression: people formulate their own reasons to be miserable. Another common mental illness is paranoia: the feeling that there is some force beyond you which is trying to dominate or oppress you. Most of us have felt vulnerable, threatened, unwanted or inadequate at some time. But are we ill because we have these feelings? In a society based on the hypocrisy, artificiality and authoritarianism of the sort that is an integral part of the buying and selling system, are those who are in the inferior social class wrong to have a feeling that we are being oppressed?

It would be very nice for our bosses if every worker who complained that he is oppressed could be classified as a nutcase, but responding to the oppression which surrounds us is not paranoia. In a society which locks people up for taking what they have produced (stealing from work),





for refusing to kill (in many countries military service is still compulsory) or for attacking the government (as is the fate of dissidents in the Russian Empire and South Africa), it is the ignorance of oppression which betrays the greater mental confusion. Then there is schizophrenia which most psychiatrists define as a state of mental fragmentation: it is a condition in which part of the mind accepts reality as it is, while the other part entertains delusions. These so-called delusions are sometimes treated by neurosurgery, the aim of which is to modify the patient's thinking so that the brain responds to all events in a standard way. A case of schizophrenia is cited by Morton Schatzman in his book, *Radical Therapist*:

Recently, a young man in the NATO military forces, with a position in a chain of command to push a nuclear-missile "button", decided to refuse to obey orders related to his job. He told his superiors that they should not command any man to do such a job. He was diagnosed as a schizophrenic and was hospitalised.

Mental problems are caused by the relationship between the human mind — which is rational — and a mystifying social environment — which is irrational. If we misunderstand the world around us we are entitled to feel depressed and threatened and deluded. When one considers just how crazy the present system of organising human affairs is, mental nonconformity is to be strongly advised. What is often called "madness" is a rational response to such problems as war, poverty and insecurity. In *The Inner World of Mental Illness*, so-called psychiatric disorders are characterised as

... opposed to a normality which is intimately related to the major value orientations of western society. It may be asserted therefore that abnormality (psychosis) involves a negative relationship to prevailing social normative prescriptions... In the jargon of the moment we may call this "alienation".

The mental health pressure group, PROMPT, has stated that one of its roles is

... to demonstrate that what currently passes as "mental health" is often the measure of the person's exploitability by those who own (or otherwise control) the means of production and distribution of that which is necessary to sustain life; and to show that a person called "mentally ill" is often someone strongly reacting against their exploitation.

In state capitalist Russia dissidents who try to criticise the bogus socialism are often locked away from the public on the grounds that they are mad. Once locked away, many of them are driven to actual mental derangement by excessive isolation and the use of drugs. Once diagnosed as being insane the dissenter loses whatever credibility he may have once had. Bukovsky and Gluzman, in their *Manual on Psychiatry for Dissidents*, points out that

Dissidents, as a rule, have enough legal grounding so as not to make mistakes during their investigation and trial, but when confronted by a qualified psychiatrist with a directive from above to have them declared non-accountable, they have found themselves absolutely powerless.

The other capitalist states use similar methods. British television, for instance, is quite expert at branding social dissenters in such a way as to lead acquiescent workers to reject what they are saying — very often before they have even said it. Most socialists will have been called a crank or a lunatic at some time for having spoken about a world without money. Of course, men like the Duke of Edinburgh who dress up in military uniforms and talk about how safe nuclear weapons are, are considered to be perfectly sane and worthy of public respect.

The battle for socialism is the battle against the conventional ideas of our age. Socialists ask questions. We ask why it is that there are people who produce all of the wealth of society and yet live in poverty and people who are idle who live in luxury. Why do grown men and women cry when they run out of money in the middle of the week and they have a family to feed. Why are children sent to school to be conditioned? Why are otherwise rational men and women occasionally seen to address the sky and ask for help? Why must we live in constant fear of being killed by bombs that none of us want? Why are our fellow human beings dying of starvation by the minute while food rots? Why slums? Why palaces? Why unemployment? Either it is all normal and those of us who reject it are insane, or else we are sane and it is mad.

Socialists aim to bring the ideas held by the majority of people in line with their experiences. This is the role of any scientist who is serious about his work. But instead of endeavouring to examine social reality, government scientists tend to be employed to perpetuate the current

form of reality. This is particularly true of modern psychiatry which is more concerned with the treatment of symptoms than with examining their cause. Indeed, if psychiatrists were to study causation they would be put to the impossible task of either giving up their occupations and trying to change society or continue their jobs in the knowledge that what they are doing is futile and often counter-productive.

If a man lives his life in chains and responds by kicking out at those around him, the psychiatrist's solution of binding his legs or dulling his brain so that he is too weak to kick is less reasonable than the socialist solution of destroying the chains. However, under capitalism — the social system which prevails throughout the world today — the freedom of the parasites at the top can only be secured by the social constriction of the vast majority. So, reasonable a proposition as it may be to smash the chains which presently confine us, they who pay the psychiatrists are paying to ensure that symptoms are treated while the problem remains.

But surely if we, the majority class in society, are the victims of this system, we should be destroying the chains ourselves? Indeed we should — but it is an unfortunate fact that a majority of that majority class have become accustomed to the confinement of life under capitalism and nothing would disturb them more than the prospect of social freedom. How is it that capitalism has spared its victims from such dangerous thoughts of non-conformity? We can begin by rejecting the most popular explanation: that human beings come into the world with ideas already implanted in their brains. This is the argument of the apologist for capitalist normality, who is anxious to inform us that we have "forgotten about human nature". (As if the moment he reminds us we are going to stop being socialists!)

In fact, ideas are not inherent, but are acquired by convention. Our language is a learned code. Our concepts of right and wrong are products of historical change. Learning is the essence of our conformity. We learn to accept things as they are in three ways: firstly, by the overt agencies of thought control, such as schools, universities, newspapers, television, radio, parental guidance, and religion; secondly, by experience of the system which one comes to accept as a natural phenomenon; thirdly, at an early age our feelings of freedom and human creativity are repressed to fit in with conventional social relationships. Rejection of these conditioning processes is often labelled as insanity.

For instance, if a child takes no notice of the social norms imposed by its parents and teachers it will be persuaded, bribed, locked up, beaten — but if these things fail and the child does not step into line it may be labelled as disturbed, insane or subnormal. This label will have profound effects upon the future econ-

omic and personal prospects of the non-conformist. People who reject the "naturalness" of their social environment are easily dismissed as fantasists or utopians. It is within the terms of sanity to complain that the rent is too high, but it is a case for psychiatric concern if one demands decent living conditions for everyone. Many innovative scientists, who have challenged conventional hypotheses, have been dismissed as lunatics. The non-repressed individual is virtually unknown in our society, but if you try to live in an unrepressed manner you are likely to end up either being isolated in squalor or confined to an institution. How many of us could honestly say that we would live as we are living now if we were really free?

In *The Manufacture of Madness* Thomas Szasz says that psychiatry

... is harmful to the so-called mental patient. This is not because it is liable to abuse, but rather because harming people categorised as insane is its essential function. Institutional psychiatry is, as it were, designed to protect and uplift the group (the state) by persecuting and degrading the individual as insane or ill.

He goes on to point out that there is no basic difference between modern ideas of madness and those of mediaeval society. Despite the so-called liberalism of the modern state

... there are still the disadvantaged, the disaffected, and the people who thought and criticised too much. The non-conformist, the objector, all who deny or refuse to affirm society's dominant values, are still the enemies of society.

This view is confirmed by an article in *The New Scientist* (21/6/79) in which

it was reported that in South Africa, Germany and Japan

... doctors unabashedly carry out psychosurgery to make "patients" more obedient and supposedly as a "cure" for homosexuality.

It should be pointed out that many patients have died as a result of needless psychosurgery. It should also be pointed out that many of those being presently held in such top security mental hospitals as Rampton are undergoing corrective treatment involving drugs and ECT, as well as brain surgery, simply because they have refused to obey the social norms. The terrible thing is that the more such people claim that they are being abused, the more the psychiatrists who are supposed to be treating them accuse them of being mentally ill. It is not only in Russia that offenders against the status quo are sentenced to insanity.

Dissent is safest when it is engaged in *en masse*. The purpose of the Socialist Party is to be an instrument for mass opposition to the capitalist system as a way of living. If you stand out against it alone your friends, family and workmates will try to dismiss your non-conformity as eccentricity or utopianism. The more of us there are, the harder it becomes for the Normals to ignore us with a nervous laugh. We, the overwhelming majority of the human race, have no weapon which is more effective than our capacity for critical thought. Ideas coupled with political solidarity will penetrate every single aspect of the social edifice which seems so unbreakable to the lone dissenter. If we are bitter and vociferous and impatient it is only because the system which aims to control us has driven us to it. Now let us be mad and sane enough to learn to control the system.

S COLEMAN



Census count

In early April, workers in Britain were treated to some special attention. We were counted. "Today we'll all be counted because we all count", said the official adverts in the papers. It was a bit like election time or war time, when we are required to lay down our votes or our lives. We had to fill in the sordid details about our living conditions and the company exploiting us. We could then read the free leaflet explaining the usefulness of the census: "Housing: to work out present and future needs we must know how people are housed now, and the sizes and ages of their families." But don't they realise that in this capitalist society needs are only ever met if people can afford to pay the price, and ensure the profit for the shareholder or the government? That is why most cities have had a "housing problem" for generations, and why there are thousands of homeless people in Britain today, while there is a "slump" in the building industry.

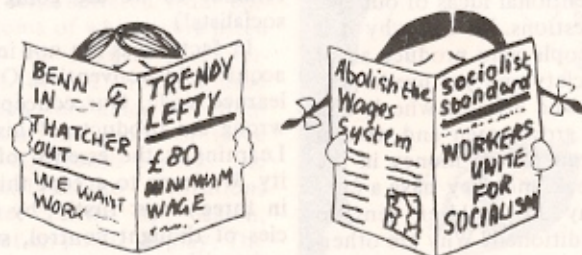
Wealth before health

Another example of how the profit system fails to satisfy human needs — private wealth must come before public health. The latest report of the Alkali and Clean Air Inspectorate says that concern for the environment is increasingly having to compete with worries about inflation, employment, difficult trading conditions and profit. And for the first time since the thalidomide case twenty years ago, the regulations governing drug-testing in Britain are to be eased. The *Sunday Times* reported that the Association of Community Health Councils is worried that "the interests of industry, rather than any great concern for patient benefit, seem to have been the motive force behind the changes" (5/4/81). The same edition contains advertisements for a Mayfair house costing £625,000, a Knightsbridge "family home" for £550,000, a Rolls-Royce car for £55,000 ... so it seems that not everyone is tightening their belt.

Imagine!

In his hit record *Imagine*, the late John Lennon sang of a society rid of the religious myths which offer the false hope of paradise beyond the grave:

Imagine there's no heaven, it's easy
if you try,
No hell below us, above us only sky
Imagine all the people, living for today;
Imagine there's no countries, it isn't



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hard to do,
Nothing to kill or die for; and no religion too...

So it is rather odd that a memorial service should have been organised for him in Liverpool cathedral. The crowning irony, though, was that *Imagine* was played as part of the service!

As for the shooting of Ronald Reagan, we have no sympathy for one of the figureheads of the most violent and barbaric society the world has ever known: world capitalism. America is one of hundreds of states competing to see who can exploit their populations most efficiently, and organising wars all in the interests of the privileged minorities (including Reagan himself) who profit from expanding markets. American expenditure on weapons of violent destruction is rapidly approaching \$400 billion a year, that is more than twenty million pounds an hour. Massive military aid is given to murderous regimes such as that in El Salvador. Each year millions die of starvation, while millionaires like Reagan are prepared to use any kind of violence to defend their privilege and profits. He represents a system in which those with power are free to kill, free to exploit.

So we will not shed any tears over Reagan's wounds; unlike his fellow capitalist rulers. President Brezhnev sent a telegram from Russia: "I wish you, Mr. President, a full and early recovery". President Zhao Ziyang of China was

"shocked to learn of your being wounded... I wish you a speedy recovery", while the Pope and Prince Philip both organised prayers for Reagan (*The Times* 1/4/81).

Apart from Lennon and Reagan there are thousands of others being murdered all the time, for it is the poverty, the coercion and the frustration of the present system which provokes theft, despair and violence. Let Reagan think of that the next time he orders the murder of a few thousand people from Latin America or Vietnam or anywhere else in the name of "freedom".

Russian gold

Those who still hang on to the myth that there is something about the Russian Empire which is different, and better for the workers than other nations in this capitalist world, will have had their illusions shattered by *Gold and Diamonds - the Kremlin Connection* (Panorama, BBC 1, April 6). Russia and South Africa hold between them a virtual monopoly of the world's gold, platinum and diamonds.

This programme exposed the secret collaboration between presidents of Russian marketing organisations and directors of companies like De Beers and the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa to fix the world market and control the prices of these commodities.

It was shown how gold sales to the West are set up by Wozchod (Western) Bank of Russia in Zurich. The film focussed on the hypocrisy of this partnership in the face of the proclaimed military hostility between "Communist" Russia and capitalist, race-segregated South Africa. But it was also evident that the Russian ruling class, involved in high finance, is just as removed from the workers of the world as are the ruling class in other countries.

Capitalist Russia

There are many other examples to demonstrate how countries like Russia and China are part of one world-wide capitalist economy, in which commodities are produced by wage-workers and sold on the market at a profit.

At the end of March, the Midland Bank opened a branch in Peking. A project currently being undertaken by Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education and the Humboldt University in East Berlin to study differences between the systems of East and West is in danger of being terminated by the East German authorities, because of the similarity it shows between the two (*Guardian* 24/3/81).

An international conference in Hangchow recently announced that foreign investors in China need not worry, for they will be guaranteed a profit. China has now officially adopted a policy of what they call "commodity economy", with fierce market competition through

the price mechanism (*Guardian* 27/3/81). The *Sunday Telegraph Magazine* on October 15, 1978 showed about ten limousines owned by Brezhnev, including one of the Russian hand-made Zil cars.

A booklet published in 1972 by the Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, on "Labour Remuneration" boasts that in Russia "The level of profitability rose from 13 per cent in 1965 (in industry as a whole) to 22.5 per cent in 1969" and even makes the outlandish claim that "Profit and the level of profitability are the most important indicators of the operation of a socialist enterprise".

But this does not mean that socialism has "failed to work"; in fact it has never been tried. There cannot be socialism without socialists; a majority of people who are ready to co-operate in a democratic society based on a real community of interests, people who want and understand socialism. C SLAPPER

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Sunday 3 May

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Monday 4 May

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Tuesday 5 May

4.30-7.00. Literature selling at Highbury and Islington tube station.
7.00. Leave for manifesto distribution.

Wednesday 6 May

5.00-7.00. Literature selling at Caledonian Road tube station.

Thursday 7 May (Polling Day)

Activities to be arranged—contact Islington Branch.

The above activities can be expanded with your support. Members should bring their own *Socialist Standards* whenever possible.
ISLINGTON BRANCH ORGANISER

NEW PAMPHLET

Some Aspects of MARXIAN ECONOMICS

A collection of articles published by the Socialist Party of Great Britain since 1920, mainly in the *Socialist Standard*.

40p (postage paid)

From Literature Dept, SPGB
52 Clapham High Street
London SW4



France's presidential election

It is said that history repeats itself the first time as tragedy and the second time as farce. Well, history will repeat itself for a second time on 10 May when Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and François Mitterrand face each other in the second round of the French presidential elections, just as they did seven years ago.

If the first time wasn't a tragedy — it was more of an irrelevance really — the second time is certainly a farce, played out at the expense of the French working class. Both Giscard and Mitterrand stand for the same thing — the continuation of capitalism. The early stages of the campaign were enlivened by the intervention of a professional comic, Michel Colucci (Coluche), whose mocking of the professional politicians struck a chord in public opinion. But even he turned out to be as bad as the others when, after failing to get the 500 signatures needed for his candidature, he urged people to vote for Mitterrand, the candidate of La Gauche (The Left). As indeed — and of course — did the Trotskyists.

Giscard, the outgoing President, was born with several silver spoons in his mouth, even though he is not a "real" aristocrat (his father, a jumped up businessman who made a fortune out of exploiting the natives in the French colonies, bought the name d'Estaing in the 1920s). He, to use the confusing language of conventional politics, is the candidate of La Droite (The Right). To be

their standard-bearer in the second round, he had to beat his former prime minister, Jacques Chirac, an ambitious and slimy politician who controls the Gaullist party. The rivalry between Giscard and Chirac was a purely personal one, their parties being nothing more than rival gangs of place-hunters (the French President has considerable powers of patronage).

De Gaulle, when he came back to power in 1958, wanted to encourage the emergence of a two-party system in place of the changing, multi-party system which had been a feature of the notorious political instability that France had known. His first Prime Minister, Michel Debre (also, incidentally, a candidate in the first round of these elections but polling a derisory percentage of the votes) thus devised the two-round election system in which, if no one gets an absolute majority in the first round, two candidates (normally the top two) go through to a second round run-off held a week or so later. When the President came to be elected by universal suffrage in 1962 the same system was applied.

This has more or less had the desired effect: there are now two broad political families competing for power, La Droite et La Gauche, the Majority and the Opposition, the Ins and the Outs, Tweedledum and Tweedledee as in other capitalist parliamentary democracies like Britain, America and West Germany. But — and De Gaulle and Debre had probably not bargained for this — it has also led, in

the first round of elections, to intense rivalry within these families. On the Right, between Giscard's place-men (the UDF party) and the followers of Chirac (the RPR party). On the Left, between the so-called Socialist Party (led by Mitterrand) and the so-called Communist Party (PCF).

In 1974 Mitterrand was the only candidate of the Left and was supported by the PCF, even in the first round. Then, in the Autumn of 1977, the PCF suddenly changed its line — the first PC change of line not decided in Moscow, by the way — and broke its alliance with the PS. Ever since, the rivalry between these two parties has become more and more virulent, although the PC is supporting Mitterrand on 10 May and is demanding to have ministers in the government he may form.

The leaders of the PCF evidently calculated, some time in 1977, that if they continued the alliance, they risked losing support to the PS as the larger and stronger partner. This they were not prepared to tolerate as it represented a threat to their livelihood as full-time party bureaucrats. Nothing quite like the PCF exists in Britain: a highly centralised and disciplined party machine controlled from the top downwards by a small group of self-appointed leaders. In September 1977 these leaders shouted "left turn" and the whole machine, from the MPs and Senators to the local branch secretaries and dues collectors, obediently started to mouth militant phrases and to attack the PS as reformist.

The PC places the responsibility for the break-up of the "Union of the Left" on the PS which, it claims, has turned to the "right". But to an independent outside observer it is clear that it is the PC that changed. The PS certainly is reformist and only wants to be an alternative government of capitalism — as the PC says — but this was just as much the case during the period 1972-77 when the PC was its ally. Not that the PC is not itself reformist, even if it wants to go further along the road towards a bureaucratic state capitalism than does the PS.

Although there exist in France these two rival political families it is not quite accurate to describe them as the Ins and the Outs, since the Outs have never yet been in power under the Fifth Republic De Gaulle established (the last time "La Gauche" governed was in 1956 — but that was under the discredited Fourth Republic, and, indeed, helped to discredit it). This is why reformist illusions about what Mitterrand can and will do to solve social problems are so widespread.

To someone who remembers the run-up to the 1964 elections in Britain, this is all *deja vu*, but not many French workers are that familiar with the British

[continued bottom next page]



LES CLOWNS

The way we live today

The name of the present worldwide social system we all live under is capitalism. It operates in every country all over the globe without exception, including USA, Russia, Britain, Egypt, China. Everywhere. It has many glaring contradictions: rich alongside poor, desperate poverty alongside immense luxury, starvation alongside good food being deliberately destroyed; suffering and painful illness alongside advanced medical treatment which is ready and available but which people have not the money to pay for. And many more examples that can quickly come to mind after a little thought.

It is the capitalist system itself that is the basic cause of nearly all the problems human beings face all over the world: homelessness, misery, mental illness, violence, greed, envy, general dissatisfaction and war. No one person or group of persons is at fault for this however. No blame can be attached to individuals personally. It is neither the rich man's fault nor the poor man's fault. It is the fault of the system itself.

Capitalism has evolved out of past systems over thousands of years. But now we have reached a point in history where the vast majority of the human race, *as a whole*, must consciously organise itself to alter the whole basic structure or things will continue as they are, and quite possibly get even worse; so bad in fact that whole sections of the human race could be wiped out.

continued from previous page

political scene in the 1960s! Mitterand is behaving like Harold Wilson did then, denouncing the incompetence and tiredness of the "outgoing President", promising to plan production and to divert profits away from the wasteful pleasures of the rich to productive investment and technological innovation. Whether the political gang who have governed France since 1958 (for even longer than Wilson's "Thirteen Years of Tory Misrule") will be voted out in this election remains to be seen. Whatever happens, it will be a close-run thing like the last time when Giscard won merely by 50.8 per cent to Mitterand's 49.2 per cent.

Not that it will make any material difference to the wage and salary earners of France. If Mitterand wins, he will govern capitalism just as Giscard did. At the beginning he may (like Harold Wilson) introduce a few reforms but will sooner or later have recourse to the excuse about being "blown off course" and settle down to governing capitalism in the only way it can be: as a profit-making system in the interest of those who live off the profits drawn from their ownership of the means of production.

ALB

The crux of the problem revolves around ownership. But not just personal ownership on a small scale, like one person owning a coat or a washing machine or a car. These are relatively unimportant. The problem is larger, yet quite simple to see. In other words we are talking about the ownership of factories, transport, offices, mines, machines, tools, energy resources, raw materials. And we all depend on these means for food, clothes, warmth, shelter, travel and entertainment; in short, we depend on them for life itself.

The problem at present lies in the fact that these means—which we all need to live—are owned and controlled by a small minority of the world's population, which means that the rest—the vast majority—are dependent for their livelihood on this minority. Yet it is the vast majority—those who have no alternative but to *work* for a living—who actually produce, organise, build, administer, provide services and distribute all the wealth but who can only obtain limited access to whatever is produced; while the small minority—who *do not have to work* for a living—have access to virtually anything and are able as a result to live in comfort and often in great luxury, simply because they own the means that produce the wealth.

The world is split, basically, into two sections. The vast majority, who are the *working class*; and the small minority, who are the *capitalist class*. This is not to say that one class are good people and the other class are bad. Being good or bad does not come into it. We are talking about a factual economic situation, *not* an attitude. And the working class includes not only those engaged in actual production or manual labour but *all* those *indirectly* concerned as well. Therefore the working class includes, without exception, teachers, farm workers, factory workers, doctors, policemen, nurses, steel workers, firemen, dockers, managers, miners, salesmen, the armed forces, shop assistants, foremen, office staff. In fact, *anyone* who of necessity is in the position of *having* to work for a wage or salary, or who has to present themselves as available for work.

And no matter how high or low the wages are the situation is the same: the vast majority are forced to sell their only *real* possession, their physical and mental energies, their *labour-power*, in order to get the money to buy food, to pay rent or mortgages, for warmth, clothes, entertainment, and to care for their families. And they generally receive just sufficient to provide these needs they are constantly struggling to make ends meet, which in turn causes insecurity, anxiety, depression, envy, mental illness, greed and in many cases causes people to steal from and even to kill one another. It is



At the Job Centre

the very fact that there is a money and wages system at all that is the problem.

And it is because of this wages and money system that there is a continuous conflict between the two economic classes, the small owning class and the large non-owning class; between, on the one hand, the owners, whose aim must always be to create more profits so as to continue to live in comfort and security, and on the other hand, the working people, who in turn are *always* struggling to improve, and in most cases simply to *maintain* their own standard of living. Trade unions, strikes, lock-outs, go slows, works to rule, overtime bans—all these are clear indications of this struggle. Even those in "professional", administrative and office occupations are also clearly involved in this struggle. And do not fall into the trap—as some falsely do—of thinking that these people, belong in some separate section called the "middle class". There is in real terms no such thing as the "middle class". Anyone who has to work for a living, *whatever their job*, is a member of the working class and cannot escape this continuous struggle, unless of course they are lucky enough to win a tremendous amount of money on a lottery or the football pools, which is about as likely as being struck by lightning.

But this struggle is *not* essentially about the *division* of wealth. It is *not* about sharing out wealth and money more evenly. It concerns instead the very ownership and control of the *means* that *produce* the wealth. And for so long as one section owns and the other does not, then there will always be this conflict. And all governments in all countries have

no option, whatever they try to do to even things out, but to act on behalf of the small owning section. Profits and wages are exactly the opposite of each other. An increase in one is *exactly* a decrease in the other: hence the never-ending antagonism between the working class and the capitalist class. Therefore *all* governments have no option but to continue—whatever they claim to the contrary—the unequal and divisive capitalist system of production, which also leads to conflict and wars between other countries.

But there is a way out of this predicament. It is this:

The *only* way of resolving this difference of interests is to *do away with* this out-dated capitalist system under which this perpetual antagonism is bound to exist. This is not a naive, unrealistic utopian dream. It is entirely practical and is the *only* realistic alternative. Only the *global* abolition of capitalism will suffice. *All* attempts to tamper with individual effects of this system have always failed and always will fail. Capitalism's economic laws make it impossible for it to work in the mutual interests of all. It has to be completely abolished and completely replaced with a better system whereby all human needs will be catered for, whereby food is produced to be eaten, houses to be lived in, where *everyone* will stand equal in relation to the wealth human beings produce, whereby goods are produced solely for social use; a system of society which is based on the total common ownership of the means of living, and whereby everything in society is controlled democratically by and in the interests of the *whole* worldwide population.

This will mean the freedom of all people, regardless of colour, sex or place-of-birth. There will be no need for money, wages, buying and selling, since everyone will be able to take *quite freely* of anything that is readily available. The best will be available to all, since only the best possible will be produced. There will be no wars since all wars are economic wars. No boundaries or rival countries to overthrow or dispossess. No poverty, no economic stress, no homeless, no exploitation, no drudgery at boring, useless, profit-making jobs. Each will have the opportunity to do whatever is suitable to their own personal satisfaction and for the good of society as a whole—all quite voluntarily. Jobs such as banking, accounting, selling, insurance, ticket-collecting, will disappear. There will be no leaders, no governments over people, simply an efficient and humane administration of things in general, whereby society as a whole democratically makes its own decisions and controls its own affairs for the good of one and for the good of all. The public power of force and the protection of private property and the government which operate it will have no place when all that is in and on the earth is owned in common.

PAUL BREEZE

Letters



We welcome your letters on articles in this issue or on any aspect of the case for socialism. Letters should be addressed to the Editorial Committee, Socialist Standard, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Too much theory

Dear Editors,

I find your magazine very informative and stimulating and going in the right direction. But I am somewhat mystified by your interpretation of Marxism. You seem to be all theory and hope to convert the working class by reason and persuasion against ignorance, a biased education system and a totally subservient press and TV barrage of propaganda. Marxism, surely, is "praxis", a blend of theory and practice. That means getting stuck in on the factory floor, workshop, office etc. and calling industrial action to foment the class war. Could you please answer this?

A. CHATTIN
Bolton

REPLY

You are correct in stating that the SPGB aims to convince our fellow workers of the need for socialism by reasonable means. It is our argument that the hard logic of the case for socialism is powerful enough to defeat the ideology of capitalism as presented by the education system, media, religion and so on. To get workers to understand socialism requires good, strong arguments—or theory. Of course, theoretical clarity is not enough. Hard work is involved in putting that theory to workers; and we in the SPGB are getting stuck in as often and as energetically as we can, bearing in mind our limited resources.

The working class has had a century of industrial action in which sections of the working class have confronted their employers over wages and conditions. While recognising the defensive role of trade unions, as socialists we urge our fellow workers to go for revolutionary political action; not in order to "foment the class war", but so as to end it by the democratic victory of the working class. Revolution is necessary because it is the entire social system of capitalism which must be removed before the chains of wage slavery can be broken. This political task involves both theory and practice. (In connection with the latter, our correspondent may be interested to know that the Bolton branch of the SPGB will be working hard in the coming months in preparation for contesting the Bolton West constituency in the next general election and should he care to get "stuck in" with them they will welcome his assistance.)

EDITORS

Fear of '1984'

Dear Editors,

I would like to support Jean Ure's comments in your January issue.

1. The majority of serious-minded people (including politicians from all parties, upon whom you pour such scorn) would probably

agree with your ideas, but fail to see how they can be achieved in the foreseeable future.

2. The world cannot rid itself of religious dogma and racial prejudice overnight.

3. The nations of the West will not initially be prepared to share their wealth equally with the Third World.

4. Granted that a socialist society was achieved, how could a modern society be organised on a world-wide scale with a workforce whose only reward is to serve one's fellow human beings?

5. What would be the reaction of a small band of dedicated members performing skilled and essential services, to those merely paying lip service to a routine job in a factory?

6. Could people ever be made to work if they are unwilling?

7. My own feeling is that society would quickly degenerate into a nightmare similar to George Orwell's 1984.

No doubt you will be able to give me some glib reassurance that my fears are unjustified, and that people will be conditioned to be socially responsible. However, my doubts will probably still remain.

R. J. MARTIN
Wheathampstead

REPLY

1. Politicians from all parties certainly do not accept the ideas of the SPGB, even though some may claim to do so. How many Tories support the idea of social equality? They say that human beings are inherently unequal. How many members of the Labour Party advocate the abolition of the wages system? Or free access to all wealth? Or the elimination of national frontiers? All other parties claim that the capitalist system is here to stay. We are alone in stating that the present system conflicts with the material interests of the overwhelming majority of the world's population and must be replaced immediately by world socialism.

2. We have never suggested that the transition from mass acceptance of capitalism to majority socialist consciousness will occur "overnight". Those who say that revolutions cannot happen overnight are usually trying to tell us either that ideas cannot change at all, or that, if they can, they will only change very slowly. The entire history of human society disproves such a conception of change: ideas can, and frequently do, change very rapidly indeed. They change because human experience clashes with scientific developments in mankind's control over the natural environment. Consider, for example, the decline in religious belief in the last fifty years or changing reactions to sex roles.

3. Socialism means the common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production and distribution by the entire world community. We all need each other in society and that is why people in Europe and people in Africa and Asia will recognise their common interest in a socialist society. Mutual aid or co-operation is the key to socialism; if it is claimed that humans are incapable of co-operative behaviour, we reply that co-operation will become an attractive idea when it is seen to be in the material interest of the co-operators. In capitalist society the working class is very co-operative—but with the master class and for their interests. Finally, socialism will not be a society of sharing, but one in which individuals will take freely from an abundance of wealth according to their need.

4. The reward in socialism will not be to serve others (which is what workers do now when they produce profits for an idle class), but to serve oneself by contributing to society.

5. Modern industrial society involves a complex division of labour in which diverse labour processes contribute to the overall supply of goods

and services. In socialism the differing talents, skills and mundane contributions which people have to offer will be equally appreciated because people will realise that they are all necessary.

6. Why should any healthy human being be unwilling to work? It is understandable that when work means employment (wage slavery) workers may find work dull and meaningless. But given a society in which work is for one reason only: to provide goods and services for the use of humanity, why would people not want to give according to their abilities and take according to their needs? Of course, if you are correct and human beings cannot co-operate, then socialism will never happen. But the evidence is on our side: humans have a natural need to expend mental and physical energies in order to survive.

7. You give no reason for feeling that socialism will "degenerate into a nightmare" and so we are unable to re-assure you, glibly or otherwise, that your fear is unjustified. We assume that your fear of freedom is based upon what you have heard and read from the apologists for capitalism who warn workers to avoid the nightmare of a world without employment, poverty and war, lest we shatter their dreams.

EDITORS

Loss of faith

Dear Editors,

I have lost faith in the two main political parties. It has become the case of the lesser of two evils. I would like to know how much different you are.

1. Are you just a jumped up Labour Party? Why don't you put up candidates in the area?

2. What would you do if you did come to power?

3. What would you do about the over-powerful unions? If you quelled them, would it be too much and to your advantage?

4. How much different are you from the Communist Party?

5. My husband and I have saved for our own house. Would we be penalised for it?

6. Would you go far enough to take money away from people who had too much and give to those with not enough? How are you going to do this?

I hope you don't mind me firing all these questions at you, but I would like to know all about it. I don't think joining a political party is something you can do half-heartedly.

D. COWLEY

Frome, Somerset

REPLY

1. The SPGB is totally opposed to the Labour Party and has been since we were formed in 1904. Labour stands for the reform of the present capitalist system. The SPGB stands for the abolition of capitalism (production for profit) and its replacement by a system of society in which the means of wealth production and distribution will be commonly owned and democratically controlled by the whole community.

2. The SPGB does not want to obtain power. We want to see power placed in the hands of the working class once they are consciously and democratically organised for socialism. Once the workers of the world have taken over state power, they will use it in order to get rid of capitalism and establish a system of production for use.

3. The trade unions are not "over-powerful". It is the small minority of the world's population who live in luxury as a result of receiving rent, interest and profit – the capitalist class – who are the ones who enjoy social power at the

moment; they enjoy it at the expense of the majority – the working class – whom they exploit. Trade unions are a necessary means of bargaining over the intensity of exploitation. But socialists want workers to go beyond trade unions (the industrial struggle) and use their political power to get rid of this exploitative social system once and for all. There will be no trade unions in a socialist society, since there will be no economic classes and therefore no conflict of interest. The capitalist-run media hates to see workers using our power, even in militant trade union action. Socialists claim that workers have hardly started to flex their muscles. We have nothing to lose and much to gain from workers recognising their strength.

4. The Communist Party claims that there is socialism in Russia. We point out that it is a state capitalist dictatorship. The CP advises workers to reform capitalism to their advantage; we say this cannot be done and that the only solution to working class problems is political action to establish socialism. The CP stands for capitalism. We stand for socialism or communism. The two terms mean the same thing, when properly used.

5. We want a society where houses are built for humans to freely live in, not for sale. Why should you have to save up in order to have a roof over your head when society is now quite able to build adequate accommodation for everyone?

6. The SPGB does not stand for the redistribution of wealth, but for free access to all wealth within a society where the productive machinery is owned by everyone without distinction

of race and sex. Society is now capable of providing an abundance of wealth to fulfil human needs without anyone going short. This will not require the rich to give to the poor, but the elimination of the inequality of class.

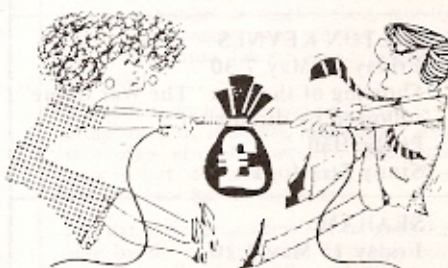
We agree that joining a political party is a serious business and we welcome your thoughtful questions. We do not put up candidates in Somerset because the SPGB is as yet weakly organised in the area. We look forward to seeing you help to change that situation.

EDITORS

SOCIALISM & TRADE UNIONS

45p (postage paid)

From literature Dept. SPGB
52 Clapham High Street
London SW4



50 YEARS AGO

Socialist Standard

The Official Organ of THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain.

No. 319. Vol. 27.

LONDON, MAY, 1931

[MONTHLY, TWOPENCE.]

SOCIALISM AND SOCIAL REFORMS

The Socialist Party will not barter its support for any promise of reform. For, no matter whether these promises are made sincerely or not, we know that the immediate need of our class is emancipation, which can only be achieved through the establishment of Socialism. Our interests are opposed to the interests of all sections of the master-class without distinction; whether bankers or industrialists, landlords or commercial magnates, all participate in the fruits of our enslavement. All will unite, in the last resort, in defence of the system by which they live.

For the party of the working class, one course alone is open, and that involves unceasing hostility to all parties, no matter what their plea, who lend their aid to the administration of the existing social order and thus contribute, consciously or otherwise, to its maintenance. Our object is its overthrow, and to us political power is useless for any other purpose. With these facts clearly in mind, and conscious that economic development is our unshakable and inseparable ally, we call upon the workers of this country to muster under our banner.

E. B.

MEETINGS

MID HERTS

Wednesday 13 May 8.00
**THE INEVITABLE FAILURE OF
 NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
 CAMPAIGNS AND THE
 SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE**
 Speaker: A. D'Arcy
 St. Albans Town Hall

Wednesday 27 May 8.15
ARE WAGES ROBBERY?
 Speaker: K. Knight
 Campus West Library
 Welwyn Garden City

MILTON KEYNES
 Friday 15 May 7.30
 Showing of the film "The War Game"
 followed by discussion
 Public Hall
 Stony Stratford

SEAHAM
 Friday 15 May 7.30
DEBATE:
**WHICH PARTY SHOULD
 THE WORKING CLASS SUPPORT.**
 SPGB vs Social Democratic Party
 Carlton Arms

STOKE
 Wednesday 13 May 7.30
 Showing of the film "All Against the
 Bomb" followed by discussion
 City Central Library
 Bethesda Street
 Hanley

BIRMINGHAM
 Thursday 14 May 7.00
FILM & DEBATE
"The War Game" (1hr)
 followed by debate
**SHOULD SOCIALISTS SUPPORT
 CND?**
 SPGB (S. Coleman) vs
 CND (P. Braithwaite)
 Dr. Johnson House
 Bull Street

BOLTON
 Monday 11 May 7.30
 Showing of the film
 "All Against the Bomb"
 followed by discussion
 Lecture Theatre
 Bolton Institute of Technology

CAMBRIDGE
 Saturday 16 May 7.30
 Showing of the film
 "The War Game"
 followed by discussion
 Mawson Hall
 Mawson Road

CECIL OVERIN

We are sad to record the passing of Paddington Branch's oldest member - Cecil 'Will' Overin. He was over 90. Joining the Party in 1923, he was one of those who founded the present Branch in 1926. His entire Party life revolved around Paddington Branch: he was one of its stalwarts, selling literature, supporting meetings, leafletting. He was not known by many at the centre, and regrettably as the years took their toll, by fewer and fewer of his comrades in the Branch. Meticulous in appearance, somewhat reserved, but when one got to know him he was of good humour and a fund of knowledge about the early days. Cecil Overin came from Yorkshire, and as a young man 70 years ago had been active with the old Socialist Labour Party.

His life bridged many generations of socialist activity. Not spectacular, unheralded, his was the sort of consistent and dependable work which is the very stuff of the Party. Without it we would not be.

L S

SID PETTIT

Regrettably we have to report the death from cancer of our comrade Sid Pettit of West London branch, in late March. Sid had a quiet and unassuming manner and looked much younger than his 70-odd years. He joined the Party shortly before the second world war, becoming a member of the then Kingston Branch. Although by trade a printer, Sid transferred to engineering during the war and remained in that occupation until his retirement.

In his later years he was a member of the Executive Committee, but he will probably be best remembered for the valuable help he gave with the production of letterpress printing at Head Office. Shown a printing machine of any sort, he never forgot his earlier training and skill. While others (including the writer) tried to emulate him, he set to work and got the job done. The machine which had been donated to the Party must have been a very early descendant of Caxton's. Nevertheless Sid would motor-cycle to Clapham on a Sunday afternoon and set to work, producing completed leaflets, handbills or circulars.

He will be missed by us all. We extend our sympathy to his family.

E GUY

CASSETTE TAPES

The following cassette tapes are now available. Each cassette lasts two hours and costs £2.75 (including post and packing). Order from Tapes Committee, SPGB, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4. Full tapes list available. Please ask.

1. Debate between Sir Keith Joseph (Conservative) and E. Hardy (The Socialist Party) and
 "Who are the scroungers?"
 talk by S. Coleman
2. "The Bomb and the Dole Queue - Abolish the cause". Recording of Conway Hall Rally, November 1980, speakers: S. Coleman, D. Donnelly, E. Hardy and
 Debate between A. Ellis (Liberal Party) and S. Coleman (The Socialist Party)
3. "Marx and the abolition of the wages system".
 Speakers: E. Hardy, R. Warrington and
 "Principles of Socialism"
 talk by D. Donnelly

GLASGOW

Sunday 3 May 7.30
WE WANT A REVOLUTION NOW
 Speaker: S. Coleman
 City Halls
 Mid Halls
 Albion Street

GUILDFORD

Friday 8 May 7.30
DEBATE:
**THE INEVITABILITY OF
 CAPITALISM**
 Arthur Seldon (Institute of Economic Affairs) vs E. Hardy (SPGB)
 Friends Meeting House
 North Street

HARINGEY

Monday 11 May 8.15
THE NATIONALISATION FRAUD
 Muswell Hill Library
 Queen's Avenue N10

MANCHESTER

Tuesday 12 May 7.30
 Showing of the film
 "All Against the Bomb"
 Details of venue 'phone Steve Finch
 (0204) 651892

GLC ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND OTHER ISLINGTON MEETINGS

Friday 1 May 8.00
**THE BOMB AND THE DOLE
 QUEUE - ABOLISH THE CAUSE**
 Speaker: C. Slapper
 George & Dragon
 240 St. John's Street
 Finsbury

Monday 4 May 12.00-5.00
OUTDOOR MEETING
 Outside St. Mary's Church
 Upper Street,
 near Cross Street

Monday 4 May 8.00
**LABOUR, TORY -
 SAME OLD STORY**
 Speakers: R. Critchfield, W. Preston
 Hemingford Arms, Offord Road

Wednesday 6 May 7.30
 (Eve-of-Poll Meeting)
**CUTLER'S FREE-FOR-ALL
 OR SOCIALIST FREEDOM?**
 Speakers: B. McNeeney, S. Coleman
 Bridgeman Road Library
 off Caledonian Road

Thursday 21 May 8.00
**THE GLC ELECTIONS:
 SO THAT WAS DEMOCRACY**
 Speaker: P. Cook
 Prince Albert Pub
 Wharfedale Road
 (5 mins. King's Cross)

BRANCHES

BIRMINGHAM. Thursdays 7.30. Dr. Johnson House, Bull St, Corres. W. Mack, 36 Alderpsits Rd, Shard End, Birmingham B34 7RR. Tel. (021) 748 5805.

BOLTON. Tuesdays 8.30. The Founders Arms, St Georges St, Corres. Stephen Finch, 3 Hinkler Ave, Great Lever, Bolton. Tel. (0204) 651892.

CAMDEN. 1st and 3rd Thursday in month, 6.00 to 8.00. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Corres. Conway Hall.

EAST LONDON. 1st and 3rd Thursday in month, 8.00. Room above The Whole Thing, 53 West Ham Lane, Stratford E15. Corres. D. Deutz, 4 St. Mary's Ave, E11.

EDINBURGH. 2nd and 4th Thursday in month, 8.00. First of May Bookshop, Candlemaker Row, Corres. SPGB, c/o First of May Bookshop.

GLASGOW. Mondays 8.00. Woodside Halls, Clarendon St. Corres. R. Donnelly, 15 Napier's-hall Street.

GUILDFORD. 2nd and 4th Friday 7.00. Friends Meeting House, North Street. Corres. T. Bullen, 17 Bellfields Rd, Guildford GU1 1QG. Tel. (0483) 34958.

HARINGEY. Thursdays 8.00. West Green Library, Vincent Rd, Tottenham, London N15 (few minutes from Turnpike Lane tube). Corres. 17 Dorset Road, N22.

ISLINGTON. Thursdays 8.00. Prince Albert (1st floor), 37 Wharfedale Road, N1. Corres. Chris Dufton, 19 Brambledown, 77 Crouch Hill, N4.

LEWISHAM. 2nd Thursday in month, 8.15. Room 2, Davenport House, Davenport Road, London SE6. Corres. Davenport House.

NORTH EAST. Wednesdays 7.30. Rock House Community Centre, Seaham, Co. Durham. Corres. V. Maratty, 184 The Avenue, Deneside, Seaham.

NORTH WEST LONDON. 2nd and 4th Thursday in month, 8.00. Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Rd, NW6 (corner of Abbey Rd, next to Lillie Langtry pub). Corres. C. May, 1 Hanover Rd, NW10. Tel. 459 3437.

PADDINGTON. Thursdays 8.30 The Swan, 17 Needham Rd W11 (off Westbourne Grove). Corres. SPGB, 76 Ladbroke Grove, W11.

SOUTHEND. 1st and 3rd Tuesday in month, 8.00. 19 Kingswood Chase, Leigh-on-Sea. Corres. A. Partner, 28 Hambro Hill, Rayleigh, Essex. Rayleigh (0268) 774974.

SOUTH WEST LONDON. Mondays (except Bank holidays) 8.30. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4. Corres. 52 Clapham High Street, SW4.

SWANSEA. 2nd and 4th Monday in month, 7.30. Central Library, Alexandra Rd, Swansea. Corres. H. K. Moss, 4 Aylesbury Rd, Brynmill, Swansea SA2 0BS. Tel. (0792) 464872.

WEST LONDON. Fridays 8.00 The Old Chiswick Town Hall, Turnham Green (corner of Sutton Court Rd). Corres. E. Haynes, 127 Kingston Rd, Teddington, Midd.

FOR INFORMATION

BATH. B. McNeeney, The Cottage, Hartley Farm, Upper Swainswick, Bath. Tel. (0225) 852051.

BRISTOL. J. Flowers, 101 Chesterfield Road, St Andrews, Bristol BS6 5DS.

DERBY. Frank V. Cash, 62 William St, Derby DE1 3LZ.

DONCASTER. R. W. Edwards, 9 Mathersey Close, Doncaster DN4 7PZ. Tel. (0302) 57996.

DUNDEE. J. Finnie, 28 Hill Street.

EAST GRINSTEAD. A. Atkinson, 24 Estcots Drive, East Grinstead, W. Sussex. Tel. (0342) 311874.

EAST KILBRIDE. J. Thompson, 2 Balfour Terrace, Murray, East Kilbride. Tel. (32) 23083.

EDGWARE. A. Waite, 61 Fairfield Crescent. Tel. (01) 952 3556.

ESSEX/SUFFOLK. Mackenzie Dodds, Fern Cottage, Fern Hill, Glensford, Suffolk.

HARROW. Ian Stuart, 39 Eastcote Road, Pinner. Tel. 866 0216.

HARWICH. C. Bennet, 48 Ashley Road, Dovercourt, Harwich, Essex.

HASLEMERE. R. Cox, 86 Lion Lane. Tel. (0428) 2885.

HULL. Peter Pink, 9 Beech Grove, Beverley Road. Tel. (0482) 441296.

MEDWAY (Kent). L. Cox, 110 Bell's Lane, Hoo, Rochester, Kent. Tel. (0634) 250513.

MID LANCs. Brian Livesey, 149 Belfield Road, Accrington, Lancs.

MILTON KEYNES. C. Kincaid, 14 Weavers Hill, Milton Keynes, MK11 2BD.

NEWPORT. Miles Webb, 23 Stamford Court, Newport, Gwent.

NORWICH. Colin Green, 3 Bell Meadow, Hingham, Norfolk NR9 4HT. Tel. 985 468.

NOTTINGHAM. 3rd Thursday in month, 7.30. 33 Church Drive, Carrington. Corres. F. V. Cash, 62 William St, Derby DE1 3LZ.

OXFORD. J. Robertson, 80 Iffley Turn, Oxford. Tel. (0865) 770834.

SKIPTON. R. Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Tel. Grassington (0756) 752621.

SUNDERLAND. J. Toomey, 9 Gillingham Rd, Grindon. Tel. (078) 324 2039.

WELWYN GARDEN CITY. C. Cox, 118 Oakdale, Welwyn Gdn City. Tel. 27591.

WEST YORKSHIRE. Corres. 20 Brandfort St, Bradford BD7 2ES. Tel. (0274) 575136.

WOKING. C. Skelton, 1 Adelaide Villas, Copse Road, St Johns. Tel. Woking 66119.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

BRISTOL. 2nd Thursdays in month, 7.00. The Waggon and Horses, Stapleton Rd, Bristol. Corres. J. Flowers, 101 Chesterfield Rd, St Andrews, Bristol BS6 5DS.

CARDIFF. A. McNeeney, 51 Pen-y-lan Road, Roath, Cardiff. Tel. (0222) 390048.

MANCHESTER. Thursdays 8.00. Briton's Protection, Gt. Bridgewater Street (corner of Lower Mosley Street). Corres. D. Smith. Tel. (106) 793 1644.

MID HERTS. 2nd Wednesday in month. Campus West Library, Welwyn Garden City. Corres. P. Mattingly, 27 Woodstock Road, Broxbourne, Herts. Tel. 6164872.

NORTHAMPTON. K. Taylor, 52 Avon Drive, Kings Heath. Tel. (0604) 582130.

NOTTINGHAM. 3rd Monday in month, 7.30. 33, Church Drive, Carrington, Nottingham. Corres. F. V. Cash, 62 William Street, Derby DE1 3LZ.

READING. E. Tasker, 42 Redhatch Drive, Earley, Reading RG6 2QR.

STOKE-ON-TRENT. 1st and 3rd Thursday in month, 8.30. The Coachmakers Arms, Lichfield St, Hanley. Corres. L. Breeze, 15 Harrop St, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 2NA.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. c/o SPGB, University College, London Union, Gordon Street, London WC1.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain holds:

1] That Society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2] That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

3] That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4] That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

5] That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6] That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7] That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working-class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8] THE SOCIALIST PARTY of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action, determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Anyone agreeing with the above principles and wishing to join should apply to nearest branch or Head Office.

Beyond the fragments

Last March, at the Central Hall, Westminster, four left wing leaders took part in what they modestly describe as the Debate of the Decade (the debate of the decayed would have been more accurate). The purpose of the event was to try once again to unite the Left into one big movement rather than its present factions, each ultimately loyal to the Labour Party, but each maintaining their own petty and obscure positions (one says that Russia is a 'deformed' workers' state, another insists that it is a 'degenerate' one and a third affirms that it has been a socialist state all the time).

Leftist followers paid up to £6 a ticket to listen to the nostalgic rhetoric of the platform poseurs. Tony Benn (Labour Party) urged the assembled to elect a future leader of the Labour Party who would be honest, principled, radical... had he said that the best man for the job must be a lapsed aristocrat and Minister of Industry in a government under which unemployment doubled the hint might have been a little too obvious. Then there was John Cleese of the Socialist Workers' Party who did a passable impersonation of Paul Foot, and Tariq Ali of the International Marxist Group who did an embarrassing impersonation of Vladimir Illyich Ulyanov. The Leninist followers loved it all. The fourth and final fragment to address the microphone was Hilary Wainwright, co-author of a book called *Beyond the Fragments* (Merlin Press).

The book presents a criticism of certain aspects of the Left which socialists would not wish to argue with. Wainwright, Segal and Rowbotham have discovered (through experience) that Leninist parties are repressive, authoritarian bodies. They pointed out that their arrogant leaderships see themselves as the personification of socialist wisdom and how this tends to reduce internal party freedom of thought or action. Rowbotham seems to understand that experience is the greatest leader and perhaps we are not being over-optimistic in suggesting that she implies Lenin was wrong when he wrote that "The working class, exclusively, by its own effort is able to develop only trade union consciousness". (*What Is To Be Done?*)

She may well have quoted from Marx and Engels' circular letter of 1879 to the leaders of the German Socialist Workers' Party:

When the International was formed we expressly formulated the battle-cry: The emancipation of the working class must be achieved by the working class itself. We cannot therefore co-operate with people who openly state that the workers are too uneducated to emancipate themselves and must be freed from above by philanthropic leaders.

The fragment critics are right to reject the anti-democratic assumptions of Leninism, but we would be more convinced of their integrity had they stated at any point in their two hundred and fifty-three-page book that Lenin distorted Marx and that the place for socialists is outside the Leninist Left. Instead we get references to such enemies of the working class as the Socialist Workers' Party and the Communist Party as fellow socialists, comrades and good militants.

Secondly, the age-old Leftist fear of what they call 'utopianism', but which is in fact theoretical clarity, is rejected by Rowbotham:

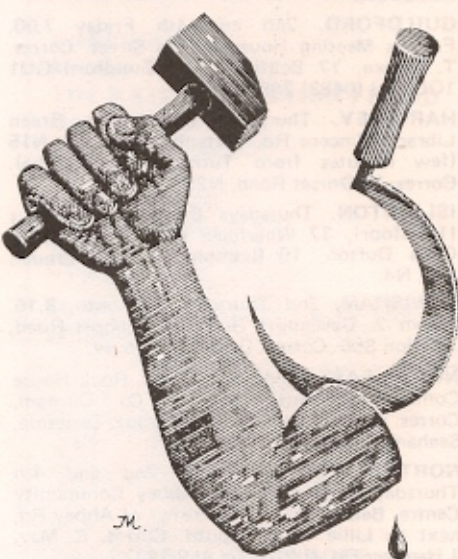
In order to explore, we need good maps... We need to be able to take stock of the situation and communicate any general principles to other wanderers. We have to establish certain staging points to refuel and assess the journey. This means we have to sit back momentarily from our immediate response to the route and try to sum-up the relationship of what we have travelled to the whole journey. Some of this will be from our experience, with information from other travellers' tales and from any existing maps. Some will be speculation about the way things will be likely to go. Our summation of the whole may be incomplete and imperfect, but we still need it in order to get our bearings. Even if we abandon this assessment subsequently, the attempt can still be decisive and the effort to be as accurate as we can is still vital if we are not to trundle down every dead end or take enormous detours. (pp. 54-5)

In short, you cannot embark upon the path to socialism unless you know what socialism means. Rowbotham's discovery of this point makes it all the more disappointing that nowhere in the book is there a single definition of socialism.

Thirdly, it is argued in the book that the fragments of the Left-political factions, trade councils, tenants associations, the women's and gay movement, radical publishers—should unite. Certainly, they should unite, for working class strength lies in unity. But what is to be the purpose? Once the fragments have become a patchwork what will they say, do or achieve? Beyond the fragments to where... and why... and how... and when? Many questions, but our authors provide no answers which go beyond the sterile claim that we must unite to get rid of the Tory government. In December 1904 a *Socialist Standard* editorial

applied itself to the question of 'Socialist Unity':

We are all for unity. We believe that unity of party organisation based upon unity of purpose, unity of principle and unity of method is the one thing desirable. But today we are only sure that such unity of party organisation, so far as the various groups of socialists in any country are concerned, would be at the expense of unity of purpose, principle and method... Unity is an important factor in the growth of a party, but it is not the most important. Better far



to have a party, however small, with common principles and a common end, than a party, however large, which is bound by no tie save party interest. We, therefore, who differ from those other parties in essential principle—inasmuch as we accept the principle of the class struggle while they do not—cannot consent to unite our forces with theirs. It would weaken both parties—and the weakening would be more disastrous to the uncompromising section than to the revisionist.

This is why the Socialist Party of Great Britain has preserved its independence since 1904 from all the fragments which working class discontent has thrown up. We are not hostile to them because we like being on our own or are temperamentally aggressive, but because we have a programme of uncompromising revolution which stands in total opposition to the piecemeal reform policies of the fragments. We have gone beyond the fragments. Wainwright, Segal and Rowbotham are to be applauded for having recognised the political rut which the Left is in, but the lesson which they and their fellow fragments must now learn is that until they climb out of the ditch of reformism they will never go beyond the muddy theory which obscures their political vision.

S COLEMAN

